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Summary record of the first part* of the first meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 23 June 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Kamau ..... (Kenya)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda

Opening session

Opening statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

Keynote address by the President of the African Development Bank

* The summary record of the second part of the meeting, held on Thursday, 23 June 2016, at 5 p.m., appears as document PBC/10/AS/SR.1/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda (PBC/10/AS/1)

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Opening of the session

2. **The Chair**, declaring open the 2016 annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission, said that in South Sudan, where tens of thousands of people had been killed and two million displaced, there had been a cessation of fighting in August 2015. Whenever peace was achieved, celebration was in order. In Colombia, a peace agreement had been signed just two days earlier, after a 50-year ordeal that had seen 5 million displaced and 220,000 killed.

3. The third anniversary of Peacebuilding Day would be marked by a discussion entitled "Transitions as a challenge to consolidating peace and security: the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in diplomacy and political accompaniment."

4. In places where peace was lacking, hundreds of people were living in circumstances of unimaginable suffering, exploitation, abuse and death. Their cries must not go unheeded.

5. The current annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission was of particular importance, given the adoption on 27 April of General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). The two resolutions were substantively identical and recognized that "sustaining peace" was a shared task that needed to be fulfilled by Governments and national stakeholders, as well as through sustained international attention and assistance to build national capacities. Sustaining peace required a comprehensive approach that considered all stages of conflict, especially prevention and the need to address the root causes of conflict.

6. Having suffered deterioration in human capital as well as economic collapse, most countries emerging from conflict remained fragile and vulnerable, particularly during the early stages of the transition from conflict. That situation was further compounded by devastation of institutions, social cohesion and the rule of law. At such times, confidence and credibility in governance institutions tended to be at an all-time low. Transitions therefore required special attention and resources, as well as resolve on the part of the international community.

7. During the two working sessions, various kinds of transitions from violent conflict to sustainable peace and development would be considered, as would the specific challenges faced by conflict-affected countries. The effect on national development of shifts in United Nations engagement, and especially the drawdown of peacekeeping operations, would also be discussed.

8. That would be followed by discussion of how the Commission, which was uniquely placed as an intergovernmental advisory body, could convene the key stakeholders and partners from within and outside the United Nations system in order to provide, with the consent of the relevant countries, political commitment to countries that needed it and advocacy support to countries in transition. Also under discussion would be matters related to how the Commission could work to bridge policy and operational gaps among the principal bodies working for greater peace in the world, and work with operational entities of the United Nations that invested in peacebuilding and in efforts to build more inclusive and peaceful societies; and how it could draw in partners, including regional, non-governmental and private sector partners, to better bring coordinated support to peacebuilding efforts. The rule of law was of particular importance in that process.

Opening statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

9. **The Deputy Secretary-General** said that there was hope for progress in Cyprus, Yemen and Syria during the current year, as well as in South Sudan and Colombia, as already mentioned.

10. The recently adopted General Assembly and Security Council resolutions were the most comprehensive resolutions on peacebuilding to date. They moved away from confining peacebuilding to the post-conflict phase, suggesting instead that sustaining peace spanned the entire conflict cycle, with a focus on prevention, as well as on addressing continuation, escalation and recurrence of conflict. That comprehensive approach spread responsibility for prevention across the entire United Nations system and placed high expectations on the Peacebuilding Commission.

11. The Peacebuilding Commission could mobilize a broad set of actors and take a complementary and longer-term perspective that went beyond immediate crisis management. It could preventively discuss issues that might later cause or trigger violence, but that were not yet or no longer considered appropriate to address in the Security Council.

12. During transition periods, the risks of backsliding or relapses often increased. During such periods, the United Nations system jointly identified peacebuilding needs and, in many cases, reconfigured its presence on the ground. That involved three key challenges.

13. First, the risks of fragmentation came more clearly to the fore during transitions. A smooth transition required joint conflict analysis, identification of collective outcomes, joint strategic planning and resource mobilization throughout the conflict cycle.

14. One concrete case of common engagement and true partnership was the recent joint mission to the Central African Republic by the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union. In response to a request from the Government of the Central African Republic, that mission had laid the groundwork to address needs across the political, security, development and humanitarian areas.

15. The Peacebuilding Fund had worked effectively to enhance coherence among various actors within the United Nations system. It supported initiatives aligned with the common peacebuilding vision of the Member States that the United Nations could strengthen by bringing together various entities.

16. Second, it should be recalled that the various parts of the United Nations system were financed through a range of mechanisms. The different financing streams had their own complications, both for the United Nations and for the countries themselves. Critical long-term peacebuilding tasks were often underresourced. That was especially true during transitions from operations funded by assessed contributions, such as missions mandated by the Security Council, to activities funded by voluntary contributions, such as those undertaken by United Nations country teams. Development funding tended to come too late and went down too early, often just as United Nations missions were drawing down, or even before.

17. The Peacebuilding Fund had been created in part to avoid such problems by providing rapid funding for critical peacebuilding initiatives, as it had done, for example, in Sierra Leone after the departure of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNISPIL). However, Fund resources were insufficient to ensure necessary longer-term and larger-scale support. In fact, the Peacebuilding Fund was currently facing a desperate funding shortfall, despite the high praise it had received in various reviews and evaluations.

18. The sustaining peace resolutions requested the next Secretary-General to present options to ensure adequate resourcing of United Nations peacebuilding. That could be done with the support of the Member States, through both assessed and voluntary contributions, including during mission transitions and drawdown.

19. To that end, a group had been established to start work on those options immediately. The Fifth Committee had recently approved $14 million for programmatic funding within the peacekeeping budgets for five countries. The funds were to support mandate implementation through United Nations country team peacebuilding, including in important transitions such as that of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). That work would form part of the overall framework for implementation across the United Nations system, bringing together leaders of all concerned entities.

20. The third challenge involved political support. The role of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General was critical to political processes ranging from mediation, to convening of actors, to reconciliation work, to preparing for elections and supporting inclusive political dialogue. After a transition, that role often received significantly less support, but its importance did not diminish. That created a critical gap, filled partly by regional political offices, such as those in West Africa and Central Asia, and by the Resident Coordinators, supported in some countries by Peace and Development Advisers, through a joint programme of the Department of Political Affairs and United Nation Development Programme, and with support coming also from the Peacebuilding Support Office. The Peacebuilding Commission had a vital role to play in filling that gap through engagement with stakeholders on the ground, in neighbouring countries and in regional and subregional organizations.

Keynote address by former Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict

21. **Ms. Coomaraswamy** (former Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict), said that transitions were periods of potential danger, when both progress and backward movement, into violence, were possible. Nations should take the lead, but the international community had an important role to play.

22. Over the past 50 years, wars in Africa had shaped the approach of the United Nations. However, the most devastating wars in the world, which were currently being fought in West Asia and South Asia, including, until recently, in Sri Lanka, challenged traditional views of war and peacebuilding. There had been major changes in war technology. Modern warfare was characterized by unmanned and manned killing machines, acts of terror by non-State actors and attacks on human rights defenders. The use of human shields to justify attacks on civilians was deeply problematic. Massive refugee outflows and their humanitarian consequences were also part and parcel of the new scenario.

23. The United Nations remained wedded to outmoded ideas about war. It must respond to the unfolding reality and to the crises facing many countries. Not only did the current situation require implementation of existing norms, it also required new paradigms. In certain areas, it was necessary to create norms, standards and law for acts of war where guidance was currently lacking, such as for operating unmanned drones, determining accountability, data collection and surveillance of local and international actors. The definition of counter-terrorism must be focused on the response to acts of terror and should not aim to rebuild societies to fit a desired image. Attacks on human rights defenders called for an international response that maintained the right to freedom of expression.

24. In Asia, where most wars were currently being fought, there were strong state structures and militaries, and national sovereignty was a valued principle. United Nations departments and other bodies could not act there with the same flexibility as in countries that had weak state structures. While the United Nations could not abandon its work for human rights and social justice, difficult terrain must be navigated with care, so that human rights and democratic institutions were strengthened meaningfully, not in a way that was merely decorative. For the United Nations to be effective in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, it was crucial for all Resident Coordinators and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to receive extensive training, including through the use of case studies, in how to negotiate those very particular situations.

25. In matters of peacebuilding, truth and justice, evidence showed that accountability assisted healing, allowing for a sustainable peace. However, the initial stages of the process were very difficult. For example, in Sri Lanka, her native country, it had once been unthinkable to speak about such matters. However, the Government had appointed a task force that had travelled the country, asking citizens what a truth and accountability mechanism should look like. A new democratic leadership and a committed civil society had pushed the process forward. Such processes must be linked to community healing. Justice should not be punitive only, but also transformative. Reparations, planned from the outset, must be an essential part of the process. Punitive justice alone did not help victims come forward. Victims must have support from their political leaders and communities. There must be a system of reparations that helped them look to the future.

26. The key to successful peacemaking and peacebuilding was active participation by all social groups, assuring everyone ownership of the process. The study entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, a Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)* cited research that proved conclusively that women's participation was clearly linked to the sustainability of peace processes. That was also the case for other marginalized groups. Inclusivity was the key to long-lasting peace.

27. Social and economic programmes were crucial for peacebuilding. State structures, skill levels and markets varied across the world. Before project design was begun, therefore, it was important for local partners and the international community to engage in joint, comprehensive mapping of community needs and existing resources.

28. During conflict and immediately after, women and young men survivors went into survival mode, often falling victim to violence, abuse and trafficking

or being forced to flee. Those groups must be immediately targeted for protection and assistance. It was reasonable to request that 15 per cent of all peacebuilding funds be earmarked for women. The older women of the community were generally trusted by all parties to keep the peace.

29. Recent studies on peacebuilding, peacekeeping and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) stated clearly that prevention that respected human rights was the most important part of the process. It required very little investment. The doctrine of countering violent extremism was porous, requiring cautious implementation. Some of its elements were best put into practice by the communities themselves. Extremism and acts of individual hate existed in all societies. Such acts should trigger international intervention if there were violations of rights under international standards with which the State was unable to cope. Conceptual clarity with regard to violent extremism and counter-terrorism was lacking, disrupting societies and leading to perpetual cycles of violence.

30. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*, the study referred to earlier, contained comprehensive recommendations to prevent renewed conflict that should be part of any peacebuilding exercise. The recommendations touched upon the use of satellite phones, the presence of armed and non-armed personnel in areas of potential conflict and ongoing dialogue at the local, national and international levels. The study also suggested setting up a special unit in the Office of the Secretary-General to analyse information from conflict areas on violence against women and child soldiers, thus enabling the Secretary-General to brief Member States and United Nations agencies so that they could engage more effectively with Governments.

31. In the early years of the United Nations, peacebuilding had been exclusively project-based, involving economic and social programmes to enable societies to heal and develop livelihoods. It had then evolved to include United Nations offices as equal partners in nation-building and conflict prevention. Yet the United Nations was often not equal to the task. It was most important to understand a rapidly changing situation on the ground. Resources were lacking, leading at times to implementation of counter-productive, one-size-fits-all policies.

32. Hardworking people in the field, who worked at times in conflicts that were beyond their understanding or control, often lacked guidance. The leaders of the United Nations must truly take stock of how peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding were carried out. Drastic restructuring and new norms were needed. All paradigms must be discarded.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m.